This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method ~~of Internet Protocol (IP) provisioning for use in a network having a network provisioning unit (NPU) in communication with a plurality of embedded settop boxes (eSTBs), the method~~ comprising:

receiving ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning requests from ~~eSTBs~~STBs, provided by at least two different vendors, through a signaling pathway that uses a firewall to separate a management network from a data network housing ~~the~~ a network provisioning unit (NPU), the management network and the data network functioning on a content distribution side of a network, the ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning requests outputted according to a first protocol;

identifying one of the at least two different vendors associated with ~~each~~ the ~~eSTB~~STBs;

identifying ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning data associated with each identified vendor; and

transmitting the identified ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning data from the NPU to the ~~eSTBs~~ STBs requesting the ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning, through the signaling pathway ~~that uses the firewall to separate the management network from the data network housing the NPU~~, wherein the identified ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning data is outputted according to the first protocol such that the provisioning of the ~~eSTBs~~ STBs is standardized for each of the at least two different vendors.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising determining the vendor of the requesting ~~eSTB~~ STB using the NPU based on an ~~eSTB~~ STB vendor identifier included in the ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning request.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the NPU includes a database comprising IP provisioning data associated by vendor identifiers with a plurality of ~~eSTB~~ STB vendors, and wherein determining the vendor of the requesting ~~eSTB~~ STB includes

searching the database for a vendor identifier that matches with the ~~eSTB~~ STB vendor identifier.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the ~~eSTB~~ STB vendor identifier includes at least one of a serial number, a hardware version, a software version, an Organization Unique Identifier (OUI), a model number, or a vendor name.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein each ~~eSTB~~ STB is associated with Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and wherein each CPE includes an embedded cable modem (eCM), and the method further comprises bridging IP signals through the eCM to the ~~eSTB~~STB.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the first protocol is defined according to a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP).

8-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A system for Internet Protocol (IP) provisioning over a network, the system comprising:

a plurality of ~~embedded~~ settop boxes ~~(eSTBs)~~ (STBs) in communication with the network, at least two of the ~~eSTBs~~ STBs provided by at least two different vendors, each ~~eSTB~~ STB configured to transmit, according to a first protocol, IP provisioning requests through a signaling pathway that uses a firewall to separate a management network from a data network within the network ~~according to a first protocol~~, the management network and the data network functioning on a content distribution side of the network; and

a network provisioning unit (NPU) within the data network, the NPU configured to receive the ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning requests, identify one of the at least two different vendors associated with ~~each~~ the ~~eSTB~~STBs, identify ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning data associated with each identified vendor, and ~~then~~ transmit the identified ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning data through the signaling pathway ~~that uses the firewall to separate the management network from the data network housing the NPU~~, wherein the identified ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning data is transmitted according to the first protocol such that the provisioning of the ~~eSTBs~~ STBs is standard for ~~each vendor~~the at least two different vendors in so far as each ~~eSTB~~ STB utilizes the first protocol for provisioning.

15. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14 wherein the NPU selects the provisioning data according to the vendor of the requesting ~~eSTB~~STB.

16. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the NPU determines the vendor of the requesting ~~eSTB~~ STB vendor identifier included in the ~~eSTB~~ STB IP provisioning request.

17. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 16 wherein the NPU includes a database comprising IP provisioning data associated by vendor identifiers with a plurality of ~~eSTB~~ STB vendors, and wherein the NPU determines the vendor of the requesting ~~eSTB~~ STB by searching the database for a vendor identifier that matches with the ~~eSTB~~ STB vendor identifier.

18-19. Cancelled

20. (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein the first protocol is defined according to a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP).

21. (Currently Amended) A method ~~of provisioning settop boxes (STBs) to execute a set of operations associated with supporting media services provided by a media service provider when the STBs have different instructional requirements depending on whether the STBs are provided by a first or second vendor, the method~~ comprising:

receiving provisioning requests from ~~the~~ STBs through a signaling pathway that uses a firewall to separate a management network from a data network housing a network provisioning unit (NPU), the management network and the data network functioning on a content distribution side of an information distribution network;

identifying at least one of the STBs requesting the provisioning to be associated with ~~the~~ a first vendor and at least one of the STBs requesting the provisioning to be associated with ~~the~~ a second vendor;

identifying provisioning instructions associated with each identified vendor; and

providing the provisioning instructions to the requesting STBs according to the different instructional requirements of the first and second vendors identified to be associated with the requesting STBs through the signaling pathway ~~that uses the firewall to separate the management network from the data network housing the NPU~~, the provisioning instructions being sufficient to program the requesting STBs to execute ~~the~~ a

set of operations associated with supporting ~~the~~ media services provided by ~~the~~ media service provider.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein the provisioning requests are received and the provisioning instructions are sent according to a same protocol.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein the media provider provides the media services with assistance from a first and second headend unit, and wherein the method further comprises adjusting the provisioning instructions depending on whether the requesting STBs are associated with the first or second headend unit.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein the media provider provides the media services with assistance from a first and second headend unit that are respectively associated with third and fourth vendors and the STBs have different instructional requirements depending on whether the STBs are receiving signals from the headend of the third or fourth vendor, wherein the method further comprises providing the provisioning instructions to the requesting STBs according to the different instructional requirements of the first and second vendors as well as the third and fourth vendors.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24 wherein the first and second vendors are different from the third and fourth vendors.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24 wherein the third vendor is different from the fourth vendor.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24 wherein at least one of the first or second vendors is the same as one of the third or fourth vendors.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 wherein the STBs are configured to process television signals for output to a display and the method further comprises transmitting the provisioning instructions to the STBs over ~~a~~the ~~cable television~~information distribution network.

29. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said network is ~~a~~ an ~~cable~~ information distribution network.

30. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, wherein said network is ~~a~~ an ~~cable~~ information distribution network.

31. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the firewall provides separation for a video-on-demand (VOD) and STB controller portion in the management network from the data network.

32. (New) A method comprising:

utilizing a network provisioning system to process first IP provisioning requests having a standardized first protocol associated with first vendor equipment through at least one signaling pathway and processing first IP provisioning data responsive to the first IP provisioning requests through the at least one signaling pathway;

utilizing the network provisioning system to process second IP provisioning requests having a standardized second protocol associated with second vendor equipment through the at least one signaling pathway and processing second IP provisioning data responsive to the second IP provisioning requests through the at least one signaling pathway; and

using a firewall associated with the signaling pathway to separate a management network from a data network on a content distribution portion of a network.

33. (New) The method of claim 22 including processing the first IP provisioning requests from a first STB from the first vendor and processing the second IP provisioning requests from a second STB from the second vendor.